Belts

A good many belts used in ordinary dress both by men and women had more or less quill embroidery on them and some had fringes or thongs along their lower edge which were strung with dentalia. Some others were ornamented with fringing or pinking only. Very few belts were altogether plain. 291 294 531

PERSONAL ADORNMENT

Necklaces were formerly much used, but more by women than by men. Necklaces and collars pertaining specially to lads, maidens, widows etc. have already been described. 301

It seems no necklaces of quills were used, nor others of bone tubes or copper tubes.

Some wealthy people wore large plates or pendants of copper with men's heads incised on them. These were obtained from the Tlingit and they were costly. One informant said these plates of copper were worth more than similar plates of gold would be worth now. A person owning one was considered wealthy it is said.[1] 301 556 [439]

Dentalium shell necklaces were used by everyone. The best ones consisted of very large and ivory white shells. These were much more valuable than necklaces made of medium, small, and poorly coloured shells. The shells were strung on sinew thread and caribou string and were of various sizes and lengths. Some people used a number. It appears none of them were of breast plate form nor covered the breast in a series of necklaces connected with a single neck piece, as was common among the plateau tribes. Necklaces of lynx teeth were used a good deal by women and children. Men who had bear, wolf, beaver, etc. as manitous wore claws of these animals as necklaces. After the traders came bead necklaces came into use. Charms of stone, etc., enclosed in leather were much used as pendants. Nose ornaments were in vogue. None of them were of shells. 301 321 [171] 301 304 321

[1] (The Tlingit tell a story of the origin of these copper plates. The first one was obtained by a poor man who became wealthy).

They were circular in shape and resembled buttons, rings, apparently cut out in a single piece from some kind of fine bone or ivory. The small ends sprung apart and were inserted in the septum of the nose. It is unknown whether these bone nose ornaments were made by the Tahltan or procured from other tribes. In later times silver nose rings were used. These were procured from the Tlingit, who also used them. Bone and silver nose rings were used by both sexes but chiefly by women. Nose ornaments of the forms in vogue among the plateau tribes were not used. Almost all were of haliotis shells procured from the coast. Boys and men wore from one to three shells in each ear, many girls and women had four. Poor people bored their children's ears when they were infants, often only two or three days after birth. The nose was bored at the same time. Wealthy people had their children's ears bored at intervals of two or more years. The first holes, one in each ear, were bored when the child was three or four years old, about two or more years afterwards the second holes were bored, and after similar intervals the third and fourth. A daughter of wealthy parents got her fourth ear rings when about ten or twelve years old. Each time her ears were pierced her father or parents gave a feast and numerous presents to the people. They also gave a feast and presents when her nose was bored. Only people of high rank or possessors of much wealth did this. It seems if the father of the girl was a Raven, he gave the presents only to members of his own phratry, and vice versa if a Wolf.

Boring of the ears and nose was done with an awl or with a needle and a quill or a sinew thread inserted immediately afterwards. Earrings were not put in until the wound had healed. Sometimes holes were made with a porcupine quill which was pulled partly through and left there, the sharp end being clipped off or tied up. Labrets were not used by the Tahltan, but only by wealthy people of the Tlingit and Taku. Some of these people gave a feast and killed one or two slaves at the time when their daughters' lip was pierced. It was believed that wearing of labrets prevented early wrinkling of the face.

Bracelets were used long ago. These were of leather and ornamented with quill embroidery. Later they were replaced by metal bracelets (silver, copper and brass, etc.) procured from the Tlingit. Some of these had incised totemic designs on them, some were flat and others round. Some wealthy women wore as many as six of these on each arm. No horn and wooden bracelets were used. Finger rings came into use in late

6: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945)1954 ND12 Nahane ND12
Upper Liard

MAKING A LIVING

TECHNOLOGY

UPPER LIARD KASKA. The basic techniques through which the aboriginal 412
peoples of the upper Liard converted stone, skin, and other materials into 324
tools, clothing, and similar useful products were as uncomplex as the group's social organization. The basic tools came from pecked and polished, chert-grained stone or flaked, siliceous rock. Little implements included saws, knives, scrapers, and crude punches. The last need little further description than to say that they consisted of naturally smooth stones employed for pounding meat or cracking bones to expose the much relished marrow. The degree of refinement that these pounders originally lacked was soon acquired through repeated usage. While simple adzes of unhafted caribou could be recalled clearly by informants, memories contained much less reliable concerning the process by which the stone axe came into being. According to one man a "smooth" rock was thrown against another stone causing the former to fracture. Pecking then produced a cutting edge on one of the fractured edges. Finally the head, probably after polishing, was hafted in a birch handle and securely lashed in place. The efficiency of such an axe remained so limited that bone adzes were regarded as eminently more satisfactory for cutting down growing timber. A careful man took good care of his axe, probably because of the time and energy required to work not only the stone but also the hard birch wood. Knives varied in size depending upon their intended use, the smaller blades serving for woodworking and the larger for skinning and butchering. The handling of stone in the process of blade making could not be recalled. Our principal informant (O) spoke of the stone being fractured between two flint wedges and claimed that men wore double gloves in this task. Blades were usually hafted in handles of goat's horn. In use a woodworker drew his knife toward the body. The existence of a beaver tooth drawknife such as Osgood describes could not be certified.[1] For women to use in skin processing men made a variety of scrapers. One of these instruments, used to soften a hide after the hair had been removed, consisted of a thin chipped stone mounted in a wooden handle from one to three feet in length. No needlecase knife could be recalled. [324] [313]

Clay found little employment in technology except for preparing fireplaces on rafts. 323
The most dependable informant (O) knew nothing about solid clay vessels but his contemporary (X) had heard of clay-lined spruce-bark containers for boiling meat.

Bone possessed utilitarian value and provided knives, scrapers, awls, needles, and 321
arrow points. Eating knives resulted from cutting with a flint knife a piece of softened 412
brow tines from the lower joint of an ungulate and then hafting the blade in a handle of goat's horn. Fleshers used in dressing hides were obtained by cracking the shaft of a caribou leg bone and sharpening the transverse fractured surface until it formed a sensibly tapering edge. Awls for sewing and bark basketry consisted of sharpened

[1] Osgood, *Ingalik Material Culture* (1940), 87. A beaver-tooth knife for woodworking is found among the Tanacross and Tlingit. Drucker, *Culture Element Distributions: XXVI, Northwest Coast* (1950), 203.

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Upper Liard

321 412 bone spinners. Needles with eyes appear to have been manufactured prior to contact, their use being aided by a "thimble" consisting of a flat piece of bone held in the palm. The bone arrow points will be described in connection with weapons.

As already indicated, horn from mountain sheep, goats, and caribou found a place in the technology. To prepare spoons and blades from goat or sheep horn the material was boiled until soft, split with a stone ax, and then shaped with a stone knife. Without previous boiling, caribou horn could be sharpened (by grinding ?) to provide an adze or scraper with an edge sharp enough to cut through the hairs on a caribou hide. The sharp point of a caribou horn made a useful tool for drilling through wood. Another drill consisted of a beaver tooth mounted in a wooden handle.

322 412 Although objects of wood and bark played important roles in daily living, woodworking remained a relatively undeveloped industry carried out with simple apparatus. Spruce appears to have been the most frequently used wood. The available cutting tools made it relatively impossible to cut down any tree larger than a sapling so that older trees had to be weakened by firing the base. Then came the problem of cutting the trunk into planks of desired length and thickness. A felled tree was split with a birchwood wedge driven with a maul made by lashing a heavy stone in a wooden handle.[1] In the course of using a maul of this type a man sometimes chanted "go gak, go gak," the charm urging the lashing around the head of the maul to remain strong and not to loosen. Fabrication of the resultant planks into snowshoes, snow shovels, handles, and other objects demanded use of the cutting tools previously described. Spruce bark provided a variety of objects ranging from canoes to drinking and storage vessels. Large pieces of bark were often peeled by a skilled man who, after selecting a suitable tree, climbed into it on a ladder consisting of a spruce sapling leaned into the branches. After clearing the trunk of branches he cut a girth around the tree with a caribou-horn adze. He then split the bark lengthwise for about four feet and peeled it free from the trunk with a wooden barking tool fitted with a crook. This implement partly encircled the tree, under the bark. The loosened rind was tied in place around the trunk with babiche line while the worker lengthened the split downward by cutting. This continued until the bottom of the tree was reached. Here another girth was cut and from the ground several men now pulled the strip loosened from the tree. The lashing at the top of the piece had been left loose enough to permit the large sheet to gradually slip down as the men drew the lower edges free. White birch bark, scarce along the upper Liard River, found little place in technology.

281 From the pelts of skin animals the people secured garments, sleeping robes, and storage bags. First, however, the skins had to undergo processing to render them fit for these purposes. For covered pelts required thorough fleshing after which they were dried and perhaps stretched. Beaver skins were dried and stretched on oval frames of willow very similar to the type still in use. People stretched lynx, fox, muskrat, and similar pelts, peeled whole from the animal's body, over form boards that slipped into the skins. Rabbit skin, intended for cutting up into plaiting line, could be best dried

[1] Halted stone sledge hammers as well as plain wooden mauls are qualified to have been made by the Tlingit. Swanton, *Cultural Element Distributions: XXVI, Northwest Coast* (1950), 165.

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Upper Liard
Dease River

283 In warm weather but for a week during winter. Summer babiche broke easily in comparison to the winter variety. Cold weather drying also rendered the line softer and more flexible. Stretching frames for drying babiche were not generally used, although for heavy drying such line might be wrapped around a snowshoe. From fully tanned and [1462] smoked hide came smoked-skin line, of whose manufacture little need be said. Men collected the roots for spruce-root cordage but all subsequent stages of manufacture were carried out by women who scraped the roots with a stone knife and then boiled them for about half an hour. The worker then split such roots, smaller ones being split only once but very thick roots four times. Occasionally spruce roots were braided. This line kept best when loosely hung up and tended to spoil if wound tightly. When spruce roots became hard and dry, they could be softened with grease but urine was never used for this purpose. While willow line, made in emergencies to pack meat, consisted of a long willow branch softened by heating over fire and then twisted until the fibers had been well broken. Willow bark line found a host of uses and yielded material for fish nets. Willow roots, collected by men, were softened through an hour's boiling, split, and then used for cordage. To manufacture grass line women gathered the high sedge growing along lake shores. Bundled into sheaves for transportation back to camp, the material had to be fabricated quickly before it dried. Twisting converted the grass into line that remained useful for only a short period of time. When combined with the information that the Tahltan had woven goat's wool into blankets our informant (C) opined that the Kaska must have done the same thing.[1] Among the knots commonly applied to the 287 foregoing types of cordage are the running noose, bowline, and overhand. Two ends of babiche were spliced by means of a short bend.

402 *Dease River Kaska.* Stone tools constituted the basic equipment in the Dease River area. A flintlike stone as well as shinbone provided materials for blades which were then 324 hafted in handles of horn or spruce and birch wood. Sinew or babiche line secured the 287 hafting. To protect blades men or women manufactured sashbands from smoked caribou hide. The container attached under the outer belt of a person's garments. Although a woman had her own knife its form did not differ from the man's and the objects were [1187] designated by a common term. Before beginning to chip stone a man might swing a bullroarer while repeating the song, "chonzin, chonzin." The charm caused his magical power to aid him in the work.

323 Concerning work in clay, we found it impossible to check the testimony of one informant (E) that vessels used to be shaped from this substance and hardened by firing.

321 The caribou or goat's horn also served as a basic tool for woodworking and stone 401 axes were denied. Men split logs with wooden wedges and used spruce backing tools to assist them in peeling spruce bark.

321 Bone constituted an important material for knife blades, the material being "scraped" 402 to an edge and hafted in a horn or wooden handle. Women used skin dressers derived from the leg bone of the caribou as well as shinbone scrapers for removing the hair of a hide. Sewing needles of fish bone are said to have been of recent introduction, supplanting bone awls. Unpointed bones have provided an ice chisel as well as material for

[1] Teit, *Ute Tribes* (Abbreviated) Work (1912), 400.

fa Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945)1954 ND12 Nahane ND12
Upper Liard
Dease River
Tsetena
Frances Lake

fish spear tines. After being softened by boiling caribou horn could be shaped into spoons with the aid of a stone knife. Several implements utilized teeth. A skin scraper consisted of four beaver teeth set in a wooden handle and secured with babiche line, while a beaver- or porcupine-tooth awl permitted drilling in wood. Men mounted two beaver teeth in a wooden frame for use as a drawknife or chisel. 321 412

The processing of animal skins constituted one of a woman's major tasks. After a preliminary smoking the worker rubbed the skin with a mixture of caribou brain and animal grease. She left the hide to soften for three days and then washed it in water. Afterwards it was kneaded with the fingers and scraped on a frame with a softening stick that carried a stone blade. Following another soaking in the brain mixture the process was repeated one or more times before smoking. Use of urine in tanning was not admitted. 281

Animal hides at various stages of processing, along with various vegetable products, provided materials for cordage. Types of line included sinew, rawhide, semi-tanned hide, smoked (tanned) skin, spruce root, twisted grass, and willow root. Although in a somewhat different category, the wristlets made by twisting eider-duck feathers may also be mentioned here. Fish-skin line and spruce-wood cordage are explicitly denied by contemporary informants. Strong rawhide came from bearskin and, like caribou rawhide, served for packing. Caribou and beaver (?) pelts provided babiche, while in an emergency strong packing line that remained useful for relatively limited periods could be fabricated from willow bark.[6] Grass-woven baskets had been heard about by a Dease River informant. They were manufactured in summer by women as receptacles for storing food and other materials.[7] Grass mats met with no recognition. 283 [237] [285]

Tsetena. The recently Kaska prepared a needle with an eye from a marten bone. Although not certain of the kind of bone used, the informant would not assent to the suggestion that it might have been a penis bone. 321 412

Frances Lake Kaska. A traveler's mention of "ropes" of goat's hair among the Frances Lake Indians is evidence of the processing of goat's wool and its probable use in weaving.[8] 286

FOOD—ITS COLLECTION, PREPARATION, AND EATING

Upper Liard Kaska. The aboriginal Kaska community took many of its cues from the seasons, whose perpetually recurring cycle accompanied notable changes in the habits and conditions of the animals on which the people depended. In late summer, when game had fattened, hunters and their families moved into the mountains in pursuit of the goat, sheep, caribou, gopher, and ground hog. People thought of the long, lean season of winter as the women busied themselves drying meat and caching it for future consumption. Meanwhile men readied snowshoes, toboggans, and walking staves. When the snow became deep and the severe cold began to set in the families gathered together around a fish lake where, a little like some of the other animals, they "hiber- 221

[6] An informant reported that among the Bear Lake Sekani line was cut from rawhide, semi-tanned skin, and smoked skin. Demonstration by another informant from this group revealed use of the bowline for splicing two ends of babiche.

[7] Honigmann, *Dunne-Zaa*, Fieldn (1954), 73.

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Upper Liard

411 Bone for tips came from the lower hind leg of the caribou or moose. Eagle feathers,
321 procured from the bird's nest, made the favorite vanes, although arrows for grouse and spruce hens might be tipped with feathers from owls. Crow feathers were avoided, it being said that they made too much noise. After being split, the feathers were glued to the shaft with spruce gum and secured with sinew line. Then each feather was trimmed in a graceful arc. Two- as well as three-feather vanes occurred. In the latter the vanes always lay on three sides of the shaft; never were two vanes located on top. To contain
[281 arrows, women manufactured quivers of tanned moosehide, three feet long and six
531] inches in diameter, decorated with tassels and porcupine-quill embroidery. Shoulder straps also carried embroidery. Two compartments in the container separated bird from larger game arrows, both types being inserted into the quiver point first. A birch-bark bottom prevented the sharp points from piercing the hide. A man always wore his quiver under the left arm, shoulder quivers being unknown. When standing on land the hunter held his bow in an absolutely vertical position. In a canoe as well as when kneeling on land, he employed the weapon horizontally. The first and second fingers pulled the arrow. Use of the third finger to grasp the bowstring (i.e., the Mediterranean-type release) was not admitted.

411 Spears, serving as war and hunting weapons, measured from five to ten feet in length and were fitted with flint points or with sharpened, caribou-horn blades. Larger spears, used against bear and caribou, carried only flint points. Gaff hooks were of bone. Slings, employed in hunting small game, enjoyed greater use as toys than as serious weapons. From wood and caribou horn men shaped clubs used, for example, against the bear and porcupine.

224 Hunting techniques sometimes required the hunter to wait in ambush for an animal to come within range of his weapon. At other times a man was obliged to drive, track, or pursue game. An example of the first mentioned type of technique is seen in the erection of the "bear tipi," constructed when the people "really wanted a bear." A conical structure with an entry big enough to admit a bear was located in the bush and toward evening provided with a fire. The hunter spread animal fat around the shelter and then, armed with a heavy, caribou-horn club, crawled inside to wait. Presently, if the man's plans were realized, a bear came around, attracted by the smell of the grease. As soon as the animal put its head into the structure the man struck. The evening's success need not yet be at an end. After drawing the carcass into the shelter the Indian waited on in the hope of a second bear visiting. Sometimes cubs followed a female into the ambush.

Another kind of decoy is seen in connection with hunting caribou in winter. A hunter spying caribou on a lake might fashion a decoy by spreading a caribou skin across a willow-pole framework. With this left on the ice, the hunter hid a short distance away. The animals, their curiosity aroused, came to investigate the decoy and so entered
223 within range of the man's weapon. Game birds were also hunted from ambush. For grouse and spruce hens an Indian selected a willow pole about 15 feet long and cleaned it of bark. At the end he provided a noose of split spruce line. With this implement he crept close to the birds, endeavoring to slip the snare over an animal's head, whereupon